

## **RATIONALE DUCK AND GOOSE REGULATION CHANGES**

### **DUCK SEASON CHANGES**

#### **Return to a 60-day season for pintails**

Pintail numbers have improved from a record low of 1.8 million during 2002 to 2.6 million in 2005, but remain well below (-38%) their long-term average. Regardless, modest improvements in the breeding population and a projected fall flight of 3.2 million pintails will support a full season length and a 1 bird daily bag for 2005-06.

#### **Scaup Daily Bag Limit Lowered from 3 to 2**

Numbers of scaup have continued a long-term decline, reaching a record low of 3.4 million during 2005. An assessment by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that scaup harvest rates have increased in recent years as the population declined. Therefore, the bag limit was reduced to 2 scaup per day for 2005-06.

#### **Late Season Duck Hunting Opportunity in 2005**

In response to hunter opinions, the 2004 duck seasons were pushed back to the latest in modern times. The 2005 season dates are similar to those in 2004. Each year a random sample of hunters are surveyed to determine hunter opinions about season dates and the week they most prefer to hunt. Eighty-five percent of hunters indicated that their preferred week to hunt was within the dates offered last year. Last years shift to later season dates resulted in more equity between hunters with early and late season preferences. This year 48% of hunters whose preferences fell outside of last season's structure preferred earlier opportunity and 52% wanted later opportunity. The previous year 27% wanted earlier opportunity and 73% wanted later opportunity.

### **GOOSE SEASON CHANGES**

#### **Late Season Canada Goose Hunting Opportunity Increased by 10 days**

Federal regulations have allowed the North and Middle zones to have 30 days of Canada goose hunting after 30 November since 1998. New in 2005 - Missouri will be allowed 40 days after 30 November. This change is the result of above average production of EPP Canada geese in 2005, changing migration patterns, and a growing presence of migrant giant Canada geese in December and January. The additional days allowed during the late season segments in the North and Middle Zones will provide more late season hunting, more concurrent late season duck and goose hunting, and the opportunity to hunt over the Christmas-New Years holidays. A Canada goose season of up to 77 days in 3 segments is designed to provide; 1) greater hunting opportunity for giant Canada geese produced in Missouri (early October); 2) opportunity for concurrent duck and goose hunting; and 3) late season opportunity for migrant Canada geese from outside of Missouri.

#### **Return to a Daily Limit of 2 Canada Geese during the Late Season in the North and Middle Zones**

Favorable nesting conditions in northern breeding areas and continued high population levels of migrant giant Canada geese has led to increased harvest potential for Canada geese in Missouri

during 2005-06. Although the total season length will remain at 77 days, the late season bag limit will return to 2 in the North and Middle Zones (from 1 during 2004).

**White-Fronted Geese Bag Limit Reduced from 2 to 1**

Increased incidental harvest of white-fronted geese associated with longer duck seasons since 1997 and more liberal white-fronted goose regulations are thought to have contributed to a dramatic decline in numbers of white-fronted geese from over 1 million during fall 2000 to 528,200 during fall 2003. As a result, in Missouri, a one bird daily bag limit will be in effect this fall.

For additional information about the 2005 waterfowl season, click on the following link:  
<http://www.missouriconservation.gov/hunt/wtrfowl/reports/>.